

‘Outwardly . . . an Innocuous Conference Authority’: National Socialism and the Logistics of International Information Management

Madeleine Herren (*University of Zurich*)

In January 1943, as German defeat at Stalingrad loomed, a review of resources and manpower was carried out in the various departments of the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, with the purpose of stepping up the ministry's contribution to the war effort. The operation concentrated on the lower echelons of the ministry, among which were included the German Central Conference Office (Deutsche Kongress-Zentrale, DKZ), which had been established in 1934. The responsibilities of this department included organizing international conferences in Germany, handling applications for foreign currency by German participants in international meetings abroad and maintaining an archive on international organizations. At first sight these tasks seemed to the officials of the propaganda ministry to have no bearing on the war effort and hence to be suitable targets for cuts. However, they proved in contemporary discourse, even in the exceptional circumstances of 'Total War', to have an unexpectedly far-reaching significance. According to the civil servant responsible, 'outwardly the DKZ appears to be an innocuous conference authority, but in reality it is to a large extent at the disposal of military intelligence'.¹ The DKZ itself did all it could to confirm its rôle in the sphere of intelligence and espionage, emphasizing its links with the apparatus of repression of the Third Reich and stating that the Reich Security Central Office was 'kept informed of the political work of the DKZ by carbon-copy procedure' and that currency controls were administered in 'close agreement with the Secret State Police'. According to its own account, as well as being responsible for the 'reorganization' of international organizations relevant to the war, the DKZ was concerned with the maintenance of relations with neutral foreign states

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¹ Central State Archive, 'Sonderarchiv', Moscow (hereafter CHIDK), 1363/1/166: Ministerialrat Dr Gast to the Chief of the Propaganda Staff, Berlin, 20.1.1943.

and with the administration of Belgian organizations.² Therefore, the DKZ had a foreign-policy as well as an administrative rôle.

Historians of National Socialism have not previously paid much attention to the DKZ,³ even though the Central Conference Office is documented in the standard collections of sources on the Third Reich. Archival sources from and on the DKZ are located mainly in the files of the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda⁴ and in the various editions of captured German documents containing materials from the propaganda ministry.⁵ Recently, moreover, DKZ documents have become accessible in Moscow.⁶ Of the documents from the archive and documentation centre of the DKZ—a library which, during the Second World War, occupied several floors of a Berlin house—only a small portion remains, though even this collection fills 430 boxes in the archive of the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California.⁷ This material, too, has largely been ignored until now, because its complex provenance has obscured the nature of its contents. Therefore the documents seem at first sight to be merely a motley collection of odds and ends. In the following discussion, accordingly, particular emphasis will be placed on reconstructing the system of information management that was built up within the DKZ, since an understanding of the nature of the DKZ will allow these previously intractable sources to be made more readily accessible for future research.

The Stanford collection shows that the picture of the *raison d'être* of the DKZ that was painted in 1943 was in no sense merely a protective statement concocted by a few bureaucrats fearful of being conscripted to the Eastern Front. During the war the DKZ had assumed the rôle of a webmaster of international networks; it controlled international organizations based in Europe, using the most up-to-date information technology; and it expanded its holdings of documentation by plundering international organizations in occupied territories. With its transformation from a documentation centre to an international organization with diplomatic privileges, however, the DKZ came up against the resistance of the authorities, with consequences that were fatal to its rôle.

² CHIDK, 1363/1/166: German Central Conference Office to Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, Berlin, 19.1.1943.

³ Even in German administrative history it attracts only brief mention, as an agency subordinate to the propaganda division of the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. Cf. Willi A. Boelcke, '§14, Volksaufklärung und Propaganda', in Kurt G. A. Jeserich *et al.* (eds.), *Deutsche Verwaltungsgeschichte*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart, 1985), p. 955.

⁴ The German Federal Archives, however, mainly hold personnel and budgetary documents, auditors' reports and annual reports. Cf. Wolfram Werner, *Bestand R 55, Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, Findbücher zu Beständen des Bundesarchivs*, vol. 15 (Koblenz, 1979).

⁵ National Archives II, College Park, MD (hereafter NA), Microfilmed Captured German Documents: Records of the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda (Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, hereafter RMVP) T-70, roll 106; T-580, roll 605, file 193.

⁶ CHIDK, 1363/1/54, 1363/1/166.

⁷ Hoover Institution Archives, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA (hereafter HIA), Germany, DKZ.

The curbing of the DKZ forced the leadership of the Third Reich to adopt a very broad definition of foreign policy that now encompassed the international conferences and organizations that were previously not exclusively diplomatic responsibilities.

In the National Socialist semantic context the word 'international' (and its cognates) carried the connotations 'un-German', 'unpatriotic' and 'part of the Jewish world conspiracy'.⁸ Therefore the existence of the DKZ seems difficult to explain and does not fit in the historiography of National Socialism. However, source material from the DKZ have an explanatory value from several points of view: Activities of the DKZ illustrate the uses and limits of a polycratic structure of rule and, in particular, shed light on the debate concerning the respective rôles of the foreign and propaganda ministries,⁹ furnishing material with which to address the thorny question of sources regarding the latter. In addition, the DKZ managed and influenced international contacts of all kinds, although special attention was given to scientific networks. Therefore an analysis of these source materials can make a contribution to recent debates on new approaches in intellectual history.¹⁰ Finally, investigating the post-war history of the DKZ files allows one to reflect on the shift in historians' research interests that has followed the ending of the Cold War. The trail that the DKZ's files followed after 1943 was a tortuous one and cannot be reconstructed in its entirety. Eventually, however, the remains of the DKZ archive were brought to the USA, specified as academic documents. The fact that the documents, thus neutralized, revealed the workings of a National Socialist administrative centre, and that they consisted in part of plundered files, was largely lost to view. The dearth of interest in the way in which the National Socialists had instrumentalized international co-operation coincided with the establishment of the post-war international system. In this context, with the growth of the family of the United Nations, international organizations were playing an increasing rôle. These—the UN's specialized agencies, at any rate—were being kept more or less successfully at arms' length from the turmoil of the Cold War.¹¹ With

⁸ Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin and New York, 1998), pp. 322ff.

⁹ On this, cf. Peter Longerich, *Propagandisten im Krieg. Die Presseabteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes unter Ribbentrop* (Munich, 1987).

¹⁰ On this, cf. Lutz Raphael, 'Radikales Ordnungsdenken und die Organisation totalitärer Herrschaft: Weltanschauungseliten und Humanwissenschaftler im NS-Regime', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 27, 1 (2001), pp. 5–40; Michael Fahlbusch, *Wissenschaft im Dienst der nationalsozialistischen Politik?* (Baden-Baden, 1999); Doris Kaufmann (ed.), *Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus. Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven der Forschung*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 2000).

¹¹ Within this climate, the former head of the DKZ, Karl Schweig, enjoyed a notable post-war career in the Tourist Office of Düsseldorf (see his autobiography: Karl Franz Schweig, *Düsseldorf ist mehr als eine Reise wert. Erinnerungen und Erlebnisse eines Verkehrsdirektors* (Düsseldorf, 1968)). He also published a book on conference organization, later published in the United States (K. F. Schweig, *Wie organisiere ich einen Kongress?* (Düsseldorf, 1957); K. F. Schweig, *The Organization of an International Congress*, trans. Jules Cortell and Henry Marx (New York, 1966)). Schweig had previously cited a work with the same title under the heading

the ending of the Cold War, and with globalization and the effort to come to terms with the past, new alignments of interest and a shift in historiographical activity are likely to occur. The DKZ documents show the extent, little appreciated hitherto, to which the archives of international organizations were plundered, inflicting a significant loss of collective memory during the Second World War.¹² At the same time the National Socialists' instrumentalization of international organizations possessing differing degrees of official status serves as a reminder of how indispensable multilateral and transnational co-operation have become in an increasingly interlinked world.

The history of the DKZ explains how vulnerable these networks are and draws attention to the dark side of globalization. In addition, the case of the DKZ provides an opportunity to view globalization as a historical process and to think about the process systematically in terms of a specific case. Although the literature on globalization now testifies to a growing interest in the period before 1945,¹³ there is a shortage of systematic historiographical surveys and of convincing case-studies. Transnational networks do not fit easily with an event-orientated conception of foreign policy and call for an expansion of the traditional cast-list of foreign-policy actors. Networks can rarely be fully mastered, since thematic variety is one of their essential features. They do not tie in closely either with the evolution of institutions or with relations between persons; they neither are the product of an evolutionary process of modernization nor can they be assigned to a pragmatic conception of politics. Yet since the fundamental objective of the German Central Conference Office was to compile as complete and world-wide an inventory of networks as possible, the case of the DKZ sheds light on the methodological problems associated with such an objective and makes possible an analysis of networks specifically in terms of their rôle as providers of information—whereby the term 'network' stresses precisely this communicative aspect. That said, it should be emphasized that focusing on 'information' as a notion to be added to the repertoire of basic historical concepts¹⁴ is not so much a matter of discourse as of directing attention to the assimilation of large bodies of data—basically a process governed by technology—and to the logistics of information management. Accordingly, the present study will begin with a reconstruction of the sources, since these

'Literary activity' in the CV he prepared for the SS in 1940. Cf. NA, Roll List for SS Officers, Personnel Files, microfilm publication, A3343 series SSO, roll 124B: Curriculum Vitae, Berlin, 10 June 1940, [signed] Karl Schweig.

¹² For the debate on this, cf. *The Return of the Looted Collections (1946–1996): An Unfinished Chapter* (Proceedings of an International Symposium to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the Return of Dutch Book Collections from Germany in 1946, Amsterdam, 15–16 April 1996), Amsterdam, 1997.

¹³ Cf. James Foreman-Peck (ed.), *Historical Foundations of Globalization* (Cheltenham, 1998); Ian Clark, *Globalization and Fragmentation: International Relations in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford and New York, 1997); Craig N. Murphy, *International Organization and Industrial Change: Global Governance since 1850* (Oxford and Cambridge, 1994).

¹⁴ 'Information' appears in a list of desiderata in the concluding volume of O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 7 (Stuttgart, 1992), p. vii.

reflect the DKZ's conception of information. This was primarily a matter of building up different card-index systems and archives.

I: Networks and Information Management: the DKZ Archive

When the official from the propaganda ministry who had been deputed to review the DKZ criticized the 'excessive quantity of typewriters and office furniture' and recommended a reduction in personnel,¹⁵ the heads of the DKZ drew up an extended memorandum in the department's defence. They argued that its lavish equipment represented a share in the spoils of war¹⁶ and provided a detailed list of personnel and their duties. From this memorandum it emerges, in particular, that the Central Conference Office in Berlin employed senior female clerks with foreign-language skills who handled and processed information using highly modern methods, notably punched cards. Each of the principal divisions of the DKZ—the internal division, the external division, the currency division and the archive and library—had access to card-index systems with cross-referenced search facilities. The internal division administered the standardized authorization forms needed for the holding of meetings and conferences within Germany and also operated a card index of interpreters. The latter comprised some 350 closed and seventy current personal dossiers and gave a full and detailed picture of every individual who possessed an interpreter's permit during the time of the Third Reich.¹⁷ The currency division ran what it called a currency card index, which by 1943 contained in excess of 50,000 cards; in addition, 35,000 individual files were held in a specially devised currency registry. The currency card index, which went back to the 1930s, was the oldest information system within the DKZ and contained the 'raw material for building up the archive's personal card index'.¹⁸ The currency applications collected here were recorded on large-format index cards stating the amount of currency authorized together with notes concerning the processing of the application and information on the applicant, including address,

¹⁵ The recommendation was that the DKZ should make do with a staff of twelve instead of twenty-four. CHIDK, 1363/1/166: Haegert (Head, Section S), Memorandum, Berlin, 1.2.1943.

¹⁶ For example, 'a number of items of furniture . . . were procured at that time from the occupied territories'. CHIDK, 1363/1/166: German Central Conference Office to Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, Berlin, 4.2.1943.

¹⁷ HIA, Germany, DKZ, Personnel File, vols. 350–7. The colour of the index card indicated each person's form of employment: green for interpreters used as personal escorts, blue for those translating in meetings, yellow for those who were present in negotiations, pink for microphone interpreters, orange for conference interpreters and white for translators. This section of the records covers no fewer than 418 people and its contents are thus identical with the particulars for 1943 drawn up by the DKZ (CHIDK, 1363/1/166: Personnel of German Central Conference Office, no place or date of compilation given, initialled R[ichter], 1943). Parts of the personal dossiers consist of personal data and information on Party membership; other parts contain CVs, references and assessments of the political reliability and professional aptitude of the individual in question.

¹⁸ HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 316: German Central Conference Office (DKZ), Annual Report, 1936, Confidential, p. 5.

travel destination and length and purpose of stay. Occasionally a 'Halt' ('Stop') stamp is found, with the cancellation procedure permitting the annotations 'Deceased', 'Address expired', 'Loser' or 'Jew'.¹⁹ The scope and retrievability of the information obtained via the currency-control system were far more important than the administrative procedure itself. The DKZ was able to use the control system to gather data about non-official as well as official German participants in international conferences and congresses. The DKZ however was entitled only to make preliminary checks; the actual decision-making authority rested with the Reich Currency Control Office in the Reich Economics Ministry. Institution-based dossiers in the archive and library of the DKZ complemented this personal card index. As early as 1936 the DKZ reported that it had opened dossiers on 1,500 international and 2,000 German associations.²⁰ The information recorded in them could be accessed either by reference to the name of the organization or via a subject index in which international organizations were classified in terms of ten topics.²¹ In a report compiled in 1943 Luise Lindskog, the DKZ senior clerk in charge of this work, emphasized that the 'Central Conference Office Archive of International Organizations' was 'still in its infancy'.²² Indeed, it was not until the outbreak of war that the folders of the archive had really begun to fill. At that time the DKZ accumulated information that had been either captured, imparted under pressure or entrusted to DKZ specialists working under false colours. These dossiers contained plundered original files of international organizations, unsigned transcripts of interrogations of representatives of international organizations in the occupied territories, and reports from non-occupied countries drawn up by DKZ spies specially assigned to investigate international organizations.

A large part of the captured material, which also included books and pamphlets, came from the archive and library of the Union of International Associations (UIA), whose headquarters were in Brussels. The UIA, founded before the First World War,²³ contained, according to National Socialist estimates, the largest contemporary archive, and the most important library, on international organizations. After Brussels was occupied, the head of the DKZ took pro-

¹⁹ HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 410: Personnel Dossier for Currency Applications: DKZ Form, Currency Applications Card Index, Draft Work Plan, I 3/3 0537.

²⁰ HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 316: German Central Conference Office (DKZ), Annual Report, 1936, Confidential.

²¹ These were State, Press, Law, Education, Public Welfare, Science, Medicine, Trade and Industry, Agriculture, and Transport. Cf. HIA, Germany, DKZ, vols. 375 and 376.

²² CHIDK, 1363/1/166: Report without address or addressee, sent (according to accompanying letter) to the head of the DKZ Richter, [signed] Luise Lindskog, Berlin, 25 October 1943.

²³ The UIA continues to publish a *Yearbook of International Organisations*. On the founding of the UIA, cf. Georges Patrick Speeckaert, *Le Premier Siècle de la coopération internationale 1815-1914* (Brussels, 1980). The function and significance of the UIA with regard to National Socialist internationalism have not been the subject of previous discussion, owing to the UIA's *de facto* non-existence during the war. Cf. G. P. Speeckaert, 'Regards sur soixante années d'activité de l'Union des Associations Internationales', in *Synthèses, Revue internationale*, 288 (1970), p. 29.

visional charge of the UIA's administration and arranged for several large consignments of books and files to be transported to Berlin. It was only after these Belgian captures had been made that the DKZ assumed an international as well as a national dimension, as it now also sought to inherit the functions of the UIA. This form of information-gathering entailed some logistic measures. Wide-ranging support from the Wehrmacht, the Gestapo and the Sicherheitsdienst was needed, as the scale of the plundering and the quantities of material that were transported to Berlin between 1940 and 1942 were considerable. According to internal ministry data from the year 1941, 'over 50 tonnes of file and book materials on international associations and conferences' had been taken from Paris and Brussels to Berlin. The same report stated that 'a further 5,000–10,000 conference reports and books as well as valuable file materials' were 'on the way to Berlin'.²⁴ Assessing these captured materials, however, was a very time-consuming business. Therefore when the bombing of Berlin began, parts of the DKZ archive had to be taken to a place of safety before the Central Conference Office was able to evaluate the Belgian captures properly. The files of the propaganda ministry now in Moscow indicate that a substantial part of the archive, the entire interpreters' card index and probably also the bulk of the currency card index had been secured in bunkers by the summer of 1943. What happened to the rest of the archive, to those captured Belgian files that had not yet been integrated into the DKZ dossiers and to the DKZ's library, which also contained plundered materials, is a matter for speculation. In October the budget division of the propaganda ministry offered to house all remaining materials 'in our bunkers in Starpel',²⁵ in the 'Fortress Front Oder-Warthe Arc' which had been developed rapidly during 1943. Whether this actually occurred is not clear, even in light of those materials that have been made available by the Russian central archive.

After late October 1943 traces of the DKZ disappear, until references to it are made in American sources at the end of the war. Major Leo Alexander, a member of one of the special Allied units designated to search for files, came across two DKZ documents while going through the records of the German Research Institute for Psychiatry (the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut in Munich) and wrote a report on them.²⁶ The meagre contents of these documents—on conformist behaviour by German participants at international conferences—left the

²⁴ NA, Microfilmed Captured German Documents, RMVP, T-580, roll 605, file 193 (2nd part): Deutsche Wissenschaftliche Kongresszentrale, Haushaltpläne 1937–1944, Jahresberichte 1937–1941 (hereafter NA, Jahresberichte): Letter from Director II to Minister, Berlin, 22.2.1941.

²⁵ CHIDK, 1363/1/166: Head of Budget, Memorandum on Position Paper of Budget Division, Berlin, 27.10.1943.

²⁶ Library of Congress, Washington, DC, PB 1784: 'Methods for Influencing International Scientific Meetings as Laid Down by German Scientific Organizations', Report by Major Leo Alexander MC, USA CIOS [Combined Intelligence Objectives Sub-Committee], item 24 Medical.

American author somewhat helpless.²⁷ At this stage, clearly, no link was made with a larger DKZ collection that was also in Allied hands. References to larger amounts of material are not found until 1947, when the Library of Congress despatched a 'European Mission'. This was a group of librarians among whom the Hoover Institution was also represented, and it was to the Hoover Institution that the files of the DKZ were finally consigned after being released by the Allied military administration for transportation to the USA in the same year.²⁸ The transportation of the files was accompanied by an 'Order # 4', 'which specifically denies access to these materials to any future German government'.²⁹ There was no mention of any need to reveal the nature of National Socialist policy towards international organizations or to discuss the plundering of those organizations' archives and the threats that were made to their presidents and general secretaries. The Central Conference Office materials that were taken to the United States were not declared as partly stolen property—any more than they had been by the founders of the DKZ themselves. They were simply classified as documents to be used for research purposes. The finding aid that was eventually produced in the 1970s conveys the impression of a jumbled assortment of odds and ends and does not make plain either the systematic nature of the original material or the conception of information that the DKZ had developed. It is understandable, therefore, that the collection labelled 'Germany, DKZ' has rarely been consulted until the present time.

II: 1934–7: From Promotional Agency to the 'Olympics of the Spirit'

In August 1934 the propaganda ministry informed a group of other ministries about its plans to establish an academic and scientific Central Conference Office.³⁰ The ministry proceeded discreetly, however, and assigned the job of setting up the new institution to the eminent Berlin Medical Society. This association was told, when funds were allocated to it, that the link between

²⁷ The American report concentrated on assessing the contents of the two papers and did not discuss the DKZ as such. Alexander regarded the reported attempts to ensure conformist behaviour on the part of conference delegates as 'clumsy'; other proposals, however, he described as 'dangerously clever' (*ibid.*).

²⁸ On this operation, cf. Library of Congress, LC Archives, European Mission, vol. 17: John W. Cronin, LC to Nina Almond, Librarian, the Hoover Institution and Library on War, Revolution and Peace, Washington, DC, 7.8.1947.

²⁹ In this connection, I should like to thank Agnes F. Peterson, curator emerita, of the Hoover Institution Archives in Stanford, CA and Dr Elena S. Danielson, Archivist, the Hoover Institution Archives, for the support they have provided during the course of this research. The findings reported here are based on information passed on by Dr Danielson after conducting her own researches.

³⁰ Deutsches Bundesarchiv, R 55, vol. 743: Memorandum of Meeting on International Conferences held at Reich Ministry of the Interior on 8.8.1934, copy (extracts) of a copy, Berlin, 13.8.1934. This meeting was attended by representatives of the interior ministry, the Foreign Office, the Reich Health Office, the Reich Public Health Service Committee and the Prussian interior ministry, as well of the propaganda ministry.

the Central Conference Office and the propaganda ministry had to be kept confidential.³¹ The institution, at this stage named the 'Scientific Central Conference Office', was headed by Dr Alfred Knapp, known as the author of a paper calling for the creation of a national promotional agency for international academic and scientific co-operation.³² In January 1935, in a circular letter, the Scientific Central Conference Office revealed its existence to scientific societies in Germany for the first time,³³ and by December 1935 the new office was sufficiently well established to be presented to the supreme Reich authorities.³⁴ It was on this occasion that the propaganda ministry announced that the institution would henceforward be known, not as the Scientific, but as the German, Central Conference Office.³⁵ At this stage the DKZ provided services in arranging international conferences in Germany. In 1935 Knapp proposed to establish the compilation of personal-based cross-reference systems and the production of leaflets prescribing the correct behaviour of German delegates to international meetings; he also referred to the question of Franco-German relations at such meetings.³⁶ In fact, the DKZ already held a considerable quantity of documentary material including literature on conference organization, lists of available conference sites (with meticulous details of their size and infrastructure, down to the number of telephone booths), even information about suitable car hire had been accumulated. The DKZ organized translation facilities, held sheet music and gramophone recordings of national anthems, stored collections of flags of different sizes, made suggestions for internal and external decorations, and kept in readiness the draft of a telegram of thanks to the Führer. The Office also published a series of leaflets on how to organize conferences, distributed notes on dress code and on the finer points of diplomatic protocol, proposed table seating plans and the sealing of invitation envelopes with adhesive stamps bearing the conference logo. The DKZ's remit, however, did not extend beyond the provision of non-obligatory services, except in the case

³¹ Deutsches Bundesarchiv, R 55, vol. 743: RMVP to Board of the Berlin Medical Society, 22.11.1934.

³² HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 373: Alfred Knapp, 'A National Promotional Agency is Needed: Memorandum on the Call for a National Promotional Agency and an Outline of its Tasks', Berlin, n.d.

³³ HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 125: Letter from German Physical Society, Chairman Kohlschütter to the Scientific Central Conference Office, Potsdam, 7.2.1935.

³⁴ Letter from Reich Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda to Supreme Reich Authorities, Berlin, 20 December 1935, in NA, RMVP 1936–44, T-70, roll 106, Pro.6506, 3629960f.

³⁵ The title and terms of reference of the new institution derived from the pre-1914 period: there had been a call for a central conference office back in 1908. Cf. 'Organisation des Kongreßwesens', *Volkswirtschaftliche Blätter*, 7, 18 (1908), pp. 337f. In 1913 a central conference office was established as part of the Greater Berlin central office for tourism. A letter (4.8.1913) from this former central conference office, recording the affiliation with the Berlin central office, is among the DKZ documents: HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 360. The Central Conference Office of the 1930s, however, had nothing in common with its predecessor beyond the name.

³⁶ Deutsches Bundesarchiv, R 55, vol. 743: Scientific Central Conference Office, Programme of Work, 8.1.1935.

of currency control. Even this instrument of control had its limits and Knapp criticized the facilitation of tourist travel through bilateral agreements. He insisted that such agreements should apply only to holidays, not to conferences and study trips.³⁷ Moreover, Knapp's complaints indicate that currency control encompassed only conference trips by individuals, not visits abroad by delegates of the state or the Party. Nevertheless, currency control and documentation did give the DKZ some scope for action within Germany. Its aim, however, of attracting to Germany as many international conferences as possible was still a long way from fulfilment, and in any case was hedged around with reservations. In 1935 the London-based Medical Research Council said that it would agree to the holding of the next international physiology conference in Germany only under certain conditions: thus the state had to guarantee non-intervention and to accord legal rights to non-Aryan participants. In a position paper submitted by the DKZ³⁸ the required concessions were granted, though they were not formulated as state guarantees. Henceforward the DKZ instructed German conference participants and organizers to display ideological restraint:

For the duration of the conference it must be immaterial to us whether these people are democrats, or Marxists, or even Jews. It is the Führer's personal decision that even Jews who come as foreigners to the international conferences held in Germany should be treated with the international politeness naturally due to foreigners and should be regarded as such provided they do not offend against German hospitality.³⁹

Outspoken opinions and vigorous language were inappropriate at international conferences, according to the DKZ, and awkward questions that were likely to arise should be tactfully circumvented.⁴⁰

During 1936–7 the standing of the DKZ began to strengthen markedly. A decree of the Führer issued in November 1936 laid down that all international meetings and conferences taking place in Germany had to obtain permission from the DKZ.⁴¹ The office was now able to style itself officially as an executive organ of the Reich propaganda ministry designated by decree of the Führer. The ministry for its part clarified the status of the DKZ by converting it into an officially registered association (*eingetragener Verein*).⁴² The veil of secrecy, however, was only partially lifted: the Führer's oft-quoted decree was not allowed to be published in its entirety, although parts of it were cited on every

³⁷ HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 373, The History of International Associations [folder 2]: DKZ, Dr Knapp to RMVP, Berlin, 30.7.1935.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.8.1935.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Paper by General Secretary Schweig on the Occasion of the General Assembly of the RDKP on Saturday 22.4.1939 in Baden, Confidential.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ NA, RMVP 1936–44, T-70, roll 106, Pro.6506, 3629383f: Decree of the Führer, 13.11.1936.

⁴² The chairman of the association was appointed by the propaganda minister and in turn appointed the chief executive. NA, RMVP 1936–44, T-70, roll 106, Pro. 6506, 3629837: Directive (copy) of RMVP, [signed] Dr Goebbels, Berlin, 29.1.1937.

application form for permission to hold an international conference.⁴³ With its new status, and with its clearly enhanced scope for domestic activity, the DKZ now began to extend its international connections as well. In 1937, the World Fair in Paris provided almost ideal conditions for this undertaking. Previous World Fairs had usually been accompanied by a large number of international gatherings of widely differing kinds. However, the French organizers used international gatherings as an element in Franco-German competition, presenting them as 'Olympics of the Spirit'. Therefore the Paris Exposition was to be a riposte to the Berlin Olympic Games of 1936. The DKZ accordingly demanded that German participation should be organized on as wide a scale as possible, on political grounds.⁴⁴ The issue of Franco-German competition convinced the office of the Deputy to the Führer. This office decided that the DKZ should send a representative to Paris⁴⁵ and called an inter-ministerial meeting on the question of international conferences. This meeting was attended by prominent figures in the Party and the government, with the upshot that the DKZ's activities now received official recognition. Subsequently its personnel and budget were substantially expanded.⁴⁶ The DKZ's success also roused the Foreign Office out of its previous indifference: it protested, in vain, against the DKZ's presence in Paris, and then began to give special attention to, and to impede, the activities of the DKZ.⁴⁷

⁴³ HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 192: Letter from Schweig to Forschungsdienst Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaften der Landbauwissenschaft, [Berlin], 18.8.1938. The DKZ stated that it was not authorized to send the decree of the Führer and Reich Chancellor for inspection.

⁴⁴ Knapp emphasized that 'this accumulation of conferences in the French capital is *politically significant*' and should be regarded as a 'counter-measure to Germany's work'. NA, Jahresberichte: Internal letter from DKZ to Divisional Head I C, Berlin, 6.3.1937.

⁴⁵ The DKZ representative was to be authorized both to 'make regular reports and to ask for scientists by telegraph': NA, Jahresberichte: Letter (copy) from NSDAP, Deputy to the Führer, [signed on behalf of] M. Bormann, to RMVP, Berlin/Munich, 26.3.1937.

⁴⁶ An extra member of staff was to deal with the currency applications restricted to official delegations. A special fund of 'approx. 2.5 million Reichsmark' was added to the total 5.5 million Reichsmark approved for purposes other than the World Fair conferences; such applications had soared to 20,000 in number in the course of the year, while an additional 24,600 applications came from German participants in the Paris conferences. Cf. HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 156: Review: Areas of Activity of the German Central Conference Office; Cultural Policy Tasks; Conferences Abroad; The Paris Conferences of the 1937 International Exposition; New Recruitment; The Archive; The Card Index; Summary; Literature, 21.2.1938, Blu/Bl. The finance ministry established a special budget allowing scientist delegates to be sent to the Paris conferences, with the costs not being transferable elsewhere. This budget was also to be used to develop opportunities for younger researchers.

⁴⁷ NA, Jahresberichte: Minutes of a Meeting on International Conferences, Attended by Staff of the Deputy to the Führer, Reich Ministry of the Interior, Ribbentrop office, Reich Chamber of Physicians, Reich Currency Central Office, Reich Finance Ministry, Foreign Office, Foreign Department of the NSDAP, Reich Education Ministry, Propaganda Ministry (divisions I, II, VII and DKZ), Berlin, 8.4.1937.

III: Domestic Consolidation and Wartime Advance (1938–41)

It is difficult to say how the growing tension in relations between the DKZ and the Foreign Office interfered with internal power struggle. However, both of them influenced changes in the DKZ after the closing of the Paris exhibition. In the summer of 1938 Karl F. Schweig, who had entered the currency division in 1935, became head of the DKZ; he immediately accused his defeated rival Alfred Knapp (who had now resigned from the DKZ) of responsibility for the problems with the foreign ministry.⁴⁸ In Karl Schweig a power-conscious technocrat had taken over the DKZ. According to his personal SS file he had served in the SA, joined the party in 1937 and thereafter worked voluntarily for the Sicherheitsdienst. These activities were to lead to promotion to the rank of SS-Obersturmführer.⁴⁹

Under Schweig's leadership the DKZ underwent a change of direction. Knapp had tried to copy the League of Nations by establishing a National Socialist organization comparable to the League's International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation. Schweig, on the contrary, placed the stress on organization, the strengthening of executive powers through collaboration with the SS, and the mobilizing power of collective demonization. Since 1935 the DKZ had exercised ideological restraint, on purely pragmatic grounds. After Schweig took over, the antisemitic profile of the organization became more clearly marked. On 1 September 1938 the DKZ and the Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question made a formal arrangement to exchange information. In return for receiving literature and foreign newspaper articles dealing with conference matters, the DKZ provided the Institute both with literature and with 'carbon copies of personal files on foreign personalities known to the DKZ to be anti-semites, together with details of their political attitude towards Germany; also extracts from conference reports in so far as these refer to attendance by foreign Jews or German emigrants'.⁵⁰ As part of this new approach, attempts were also made to use the growing body of personal data to defame foreign personalities. With a view to infiltrating the International Union against Cancer, the DKZ decided to launch an international campaign to deprive the Swiss Leandro

⁴⁸ Schweig claimed that Knapp had sold DKZ files to the Culture Section of the Foreign Office and prompted the Foreign Office's demand for interministerial control of the DKZ. Cf. HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 317: Note for Oberregierungsrat Imhoff.

⁴⁹ 'Schweig is head of the German Central Conference Office and has been working for the SD for a considerable time in an honorary capacity. By dint of both his position and his personal connections he has already performed valuable services for Office VI...': NA, Roll List for SS Officers, Personnel Files, microfilm publication, 3343 series SSO, roll 124B: Recommendation Record of the Führer Corps, 19.6.1940.

⁵⁰ HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 165: Letter from Walter Blume (DKZ) to Hansgeorg Trurnit, Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question, [Berlin], 1.9.1938.

Tomarkin⁵¹ of the post of General Secretary to which he had been proposed. Safeguarded by its agreement with the propaganda ministry,⁵² the DKZ asked the leaders of German conference delegations to write to foreign colleagues on the matter,⁵³ in order to prepare 'the climate for the intended establishment of a new international cancer organization'.⁵⁴ To retain control over the action, the DKZ enclosed return-addressed postcards on which those contacted were to confirm that they had written the appropriate letters. The campaign cost a man who was himself an ambiguous internationalist his job.⁵⁵

The enhanced co-operation with the apparatus of repression of the Third Reich that marked the Schweig era—with the Central Conference Office placing its information-gathering facilities at the service of regulation, suppression and espionage—widened the scope of the DKZ's influence. The office, however, continued to rely on voluntary collaborators. The academics and scientists it used as informants, who belonged to international networks in their professional capacity, proved to be more than a little zealous for detail. The case of Prof. Dr Baader, head of the University Institute for Occupational Diseases in Berlin, may serve as an example. Baader had learned from a professional colleague in New York that a number of MPs in London had formed an Imperial Policy Group, and he sent the relevant New York letter to the DKZ.⁵⁶ The DKZ in turn consulted the Gestapo, which classified the British group as a 'front organization of the Home Office'.⁵⁷

In 1938 the DKZ had a staff of thirty-four, occupied three floors of a building on Ludendorffstraße in Berlin and had more resources at its disposal than in 1937, in the year of the Paris exhibition. Nevertheless, during 1938–9 the office found itself faced with mounting obstacles. The idea of controlled co-operation and the drive to cover all international organizations and conferences collided with the expansion of the Third Reich. The incorporation of Bohemia and Moravia, Danzig and Austria posed issues that led to problems of domestic co-ordination, exacerbated the latent turf war between the ministries and jeopardized the appearance of unity that German delegations were meant to display when abroad. The DKZ issued regulations governing the behaviour of Protec-

⁵¹ On Tomarkin, cf. Franziska Rogger, 'Das jüdische Universitätsleben in Bern zwischen Sozialismus und Zionismus, Antisemitismus und Nationalsozialismus', in Georg Eisner and Rupert Moser (eds.), *Reiz und Fremde jüdischer Kultur* (Berner Kulturhistorische Vorlesungen, Bern, 2000), pp. 153f.

⁵² HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 316: Note, Berlin, 21.11.1938, Dr. Tho/Br./Hz.

⁵³ On this occasion the DKZ ignored its own injunction against antisemitic statements. It was to be pointed out to foreign scientists 'how a criminal Jew is capable of destroying good international relationships and commercially exploiting purely scientific work': HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 316: circular of DKZ, corrected draft, n.d.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Tomarkin had been investigated by the Swiss authorities after the First World War as a possible Bolshevik; in Rome in 1934 he briefly paraded as a Fascist. Rogger, 'Das jüdische Universitätsleben'.

⁵⁶ HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 247: Prof. Dr Baader to DKZ, Berlin, 5.6.1939.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, DKZ index card.

torate and Czech delegations,⁵⁸ but was unable, for example, to prevent Bohemian and Moravian delegates to the plenary meeting of the International Commission on Illumination from steadfastly refusing to be classed as members of the German delegation.⁵⁹ Equally, the German authorities themselves caused difficulties, after the Austrian *Anschluss*, by seeking to transform international organizations with their headquarters in Vienna into German associations. Moves of this sort restricted the DKZ's international influence, since it was essential that such organizations should remain as international bodies if they were to be successfully infiltrated and instrumentalized. The DKZ accordingly supported the protests by the organizations that were threatened with nationalization and opened a branch office in Vienna.⁶⁰ Subsequent reports, however, indicated that the Vienna office was unable to achieve very much:

The International Union of Artistes was of course absorbed into the Reich Chamber of Theatre immediately after the upheaval (*Umbruch*), so far as Reich German members were concerned. Similarly, the International Music Office disappeared after the change, since many of the activities of this office are now performed by the Reich Chamber of Music. The international character of this association was in great measure represented by Jews. This was particularly blatant in the case of the International Association of Advocates, the International Timber Committee and the Department for Timber Utilization. Naturally, after 1938 the Pan-European Union under its President Count Coudenhove-Kalergi was politically quite intolerable.⁶¹

The International Hotelmen's Association and the International Association of Stockbrokers were also dissolved and integrated into German associations. Other bodies, however, put up successful resistance, with DKZ support. The president of the International Association of Colour Chemists, Prof. Dr Ing. Otto Mecheels, protested with the simple proposition: 'An international association cannot be made subordinate to a German economic body.'⁶² In January 1939 Mecheels expressed his thanks to the DKZ and informed it of the release

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 121: Letter from DKZ/Blu to President Karl Vetter, [Berlin], 4.7.1939.

⁵⁹ Two further months elapsed before the German Lighting Technology Society reported to the DKZ that the Czech committee had been dissolved. Cf. *Ibid.*, vol. 37: Letter from German Lighting Technology Society (Registered Association), in National Socialist Federation of German Technology, Foreign Department, to German Central Conference Office, Berlin, 27.9.1939: 'Further to our letter of 25.7.39, we are now able to inform you that the former Czech committee of the International Commission on Illumination, which in May, contrary to the instructions of the Reich Ministry of the Interior and of the Reich Protector for Bohemia and Moravia, had not dissolved but merely re-named itself the "Lighting Committee for Bohemia and Moravia", has now been dissolved in accordance with a decision taken at a general meeting of 20.9.39. There is now no obstacle in the way of incorporating the former Czech committee into German activity at the International Commission on Illumination, and work on this will begin in the course of the coming weeks.'

⁶⁰ The DKZ was given 5,000 Reichsmark to establish this office. Cf. NA, Jahresberichte: Letter from DKZ/Schae to RMVP, [Berlin], 20.3.1939.

⁶¹ HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 362: Letter from Conference Advisory Service in Reich Propaganda Office, Vienna (Schee) to German Central Conference Office, Vienna, 16.2.1942.

⁶² HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 55: Prof. Dr Ing. Otto Mecheels, (1) to Stillhalte-Amt für Vereine, (2) to Reichsverwaltung des NSBDT, München-Gladbach, 23.1.1939.

of the association's foreign accounts.⁶³ In fact, the local administration was prepared to release the international association only after payment of a substantial cash sum, so that further intervention by the propaganda ministry proved necessary.⁶⁴

These problems may seem to suggest that the outbreak of war would have brought the demise of the DKZ. The opposite, however, was the case. During—and because of—the war the DKZ actually extended its scope for international influence, and was able to turn these gains to domestic political account. Schweig, who carried out an impressive programme of travel during the war,⁶⁵ formed contacts in Switzerland as early as the spring of 1940 and was in Zurich when a Swiss Central Conference Office was established on 16 April.⁶⁶ With the advances of German troops, though, the DKZ's interest in this branch operation on neutral territory waned. Instead, the DKZ gained new sources of information each time the office of an international organization came within the reach of the Wehrmacht; and with the acquisition of each new dossier, its domestic political importance increased. The office worked closely with the Wehrmacht, the Gestapo and the SS in this process. Armed with a military pass stating that he was attached to the Reich Security Central Office,⁶⁷ Karl Schweig personally directed 'special actions' against international organizations in occupied territories in the summer of 1940.⁶⁸ In Paris, on a single day, 30 July 1940, Schweig and his colleagues visited three organizations. He seized the correspondence of the International Association of Criminal Law, discovered that the International Commission for Air Navigation had already been closed by the German occupying forces and went on to seal the offices of the International Geographical Union, so as to be able to examine its archives

⁶³ *Ibid.*: Prof. Dr Ing. Otto Mecheels to DKZ/Herr Blume, Mönchen-Gladbach, 28.1.1939.

⁶⁴ According to the propaganda ministry, the colour chemists, as an international organization, ought not to be made subordinate to the Stillhaltekommissar für Vereine, because the relevant legislation applied only to national associations. It would not be right, the ministry argued, for a situation to arise, through the replacement of Mecheels by a Swiss, whereby 'a Swiss president would have to order payment out of international assets to a German authority' (*Ibid.*: RMVP to Reich Commissioner for the Reunification of Austria with the German Reich, Berlin, 21.10.1939, copy for information to DKZ).

⁶⁵ In the spring of 1941 the head of the DKZ made trips (declared as secret) to Brussels and Paris; during 1942 he was in Madrid and Lisbon in May, in Stockholm in June, in Munich in August and in Frankfurt and Vienna in September; and in April 1943 he returned to Lisbon. Cf. NA, Microfilmed Captured German Documents, RMVP, T-580, roll 636, file 333 (2nd part): Propaganda Ministry (H 1171-65/1.4.43), Note, [signed] I.A., Berlin, 1.4.1943.

⁶⁶ On this, cf. M. Herren and S. Zala, *Netzwerk Außenpolitik* (forthcoming). In the course of the war conference offices were also opened in Belgium, Norway and Romania: HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 276: Letter from DKZ/Schweig to Dr A. Ith, 20.1.1943.

⁶⁷ CHIDK, 1363/1/166: Military Recruiting Office Charlottenburg, Military Pass Notice for Herr Karl Schweig, 10.5.1940.

⁶⁸ Cf. HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 125: Daily Report: Special Action against International Associations, Carried out between 25 July and 12 August 1940 under the Leadership of the Head of the German Central Conference Office, Berlin. The report, classified 'Secret', explained that the group consisted of, in addition to Schweig, a Kriminalsekretär, a lance-corporal of the Secret Military Police and a driver.

undisturbed.⁶⁹ Nor did the materials that were transferred to Berlin come solely from the archives of international organizations. There was a brisk trade in booty, as a result of which documents from the archives of the French foreign ministry and the French embassy in Berlin⁷⁰ also found their way into the DKZ's folders.

After the 'special action' in Paris Schweig travelled to Brussels and in August 1940 asked for a lorry and military escort to transport 5 tonnes of materials to Berlin.⁷¹ In this instance he concentrated primarily on the UIA, founded by Paul Otlet, and the libraries and collections connected with Otlet's other organizations, which contained an immense quantity of materials on international bodies: a *musée* illustrating the scope and significance of international networks, and a *bibliothèque mondiale* and an international university devoted to the academic study and promotion of internationalism. A *centre international*, founded in 1920, formed the foundation on which further internationalist schemes were to be developed. All of these institutions were based in the Palais Mondial, a complex of buildings containing over a hundred rooms in the Palais du Cinquantenaire in Brussels. When the Germans occupied Brussels these various suites of rooms and the extensive collections in them were in poor condition. The funding provided by the Carnegie Foundation had been inadequate, and the Belgian government had suspended its subsidy of the Palais Mondial even before the outbreak of war. Seeking to preserve his life's work, Paul Otlet accordingly consented to let the UIA be placed under the provisional administration of the executive head of the DKZ. However, at the same time Otlet continued to negotiate with the Belgian government to try to secure renewed funding of the Palais Mondial.⁷² The stolen files show that Otlet encouraged the Belgian government to use the UIA, keeping in mind that this organization had, as an umbrella body for international organizations, international networks at its disposal.⁷³ The UAI actually was supposed to survive the German occupation—but as a cover organization of the DKZ, having surrendered or been robbed of its files, and headed not by Paul Otlet but by Karl

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Schweig was particularly interested in the Union's correspondence with the French General Staff. The materials were handed over to the Military Police. Cf. Mechthild Roessler, 'La Géographie aux congrès internationaux. Échanges scientifiques et conflits politiques', *Relations internationales*, 62 (1990), pp. 183–99.

⁷⁰ These documents included a report on the conferences held in Berlin in 1936: HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 125: French Embassy in Berlin to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin, 10.6.1936.

⁷¹ The Gestapo was not actually able to produce a lorry, but with the help of the military commander in Brussels did provide a sealed railway truck. 'For conveyance of the important secret material', the Gestapo suggested the use of the Brussels–Berlin diplomatic aeroplane: cf. *ibid.*: telegram from Secret State Police, State Police Central Station, Düsseldorf to Mission Command in Brussels, with request for forwarding to Herr Karl Schweig, 23.8.1940.

⁷² *Ibid.*, vol. 373: Union of International Associations: Régime during Occupation, 21.8.1940.

⁷³ The text, not dated, is translated into German. The document's origins are specified in the introduction: 'The following document was impounded by Security Police at the Union of International Associations. It was addressed to the Belgian economics ministry and was written shortly after the entry of German troops into Brussels' (*ibid.*, vol. 320).

Schweig, who made regular appearances at the rue Ducale, the new headquarters of the UIA, until 1943. Schweig took over the provisional administration of the UIA in November 1940 and reported, with amazement, that 'every word written and spoken within the international associations . . . up to 1935' was available in the archives and library of the UIA.⁷⁴ When the elderly founder of the UIA raised more and more objections, and refused to co-operate with the German provisional director, Schweig initiated fundamental changes. He replaced Paul Otlet and conducted negotiations instead with Prof. C. L. van Loock, who had been installed as administrator and 'has assigned to Germany the new leadership of the Union, which, when the war is over, will be reorganized through the convening of a world conference of the associations'.⁷⁵ The UIA, still international albeit under German control, now had the task of 'bringing together the international associations, covering all areas of specialization and knowledge, under the aegis of the Union'. The plan was that continental European organizations would be centralized first, with 'the non-European countries to follow later'.⁷⁶ The initial step towards realizing this plan was the systematic exclusion of Paul Otlet. On 27 February 1941 Schweig asked the SS to search Otlet's home, alleging that Otlet was a socialist and freemason, had concealed UIA files and was responsible for the disappearance of the UIA's correspondence with the League of Nations, without which Schweig claimed not to be able to reorganize the Union.⁷⁷ The SS searched the flats of Paul Otlet and his secretaries Colet and Lorphevre and sealed some rooms so that they could be 'subjected to a thorough examination' in Karl Schweig's presence.⁷⁸ Schweig confiscated books and files of the UIA, and the SS seized literature that they considered anti-German, pacifist or communist in tendency.

Belgian resistance within the UIA was thus broken. New threats, however, arose now from the direction of the German Foreign Office. The ministry sought to prevent the DKZ extending its international influence by using the UIA as a Trojan horse. Therefore, the Foreign Office called for the dissolution of the UIA. Schweig countered by arguing that the 'extension of the DKZ's conference work abroad' was an irresistible and promising process: 'a camouflage office of the Reich, working in an important sector, can achieve results

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 317: Report on the Administration of the Union of International Associations in the Palais Mondial, Brussels, 15.1.1941.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*: Sketch of the Reorganization of the Union of International Associations under German leadership, Berlin, 28.1.1941, from the Provisional Director of the Union, [signed] Karl Schweig, and the Administrator of the Union, [signed] Prof. C. L. van Loock.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: Provisional Director to Representatives of the Chief of the Security Police and the SD for Belgium and France—Brussels Headquarters, for the attention of SS-Hauptsturmführer Löchelt, Brussels, 27.3.1941.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*: Schweig to Reich Security Central office, for the Attention of Obersturmführer Amthor, Berlin, 8.4.1941. The letter cites the report of SS-Hauptsturmführer Löchelt that had been sent to Schweig.

of a quite different order from those attainable by an official policy agency'.⁷⁹ The German use of the UIA remained the subject of vigorous arguments. The Foreign Office criticized Schweig's report on the provisional administration of the UIA,⁸⁰ and Schweig made clear who his allies were. He declared that he was accountable solely to the military administration and to the representative of the head of the Security Police.⁸¹ The UIA was not dissolved: indeed, the occupation authorities took over its considerable expenses.⁸² Attempts to use the UIA to enhance the DKZ's international-policy profile began at once. Schweig had already set out his thoughts on the reorganization of the UIA in a secret paper in which he discussed a possible amalgamation of the DKZ and the UIA. He proposed that a new central agency should be created as a substitute for the League of Nations.⁸³ 'The Central Conference Office', he argued, 'is not adequate to these demands in its present form. A new central office, with greater powers, a greater range of tasks and greater authority, is required.' In order that a German 'monopoly as regards leadership and direction of the great world associations' might be achieved, the UIA should be converted into an international office for conferences and associations, with its headquarters in Berlin. The tasks of the office would be to foster the external relations of German organizations having inter-state and cultural objectives; to hold, and send delegates to, conferences; to promote the dissemination of German culture and global awareness of conference findings and outcomes; and, over and beyond the organizational objectives already identified by the DKZ, to bring about nothing less than a 'new order in international associations and organizations'.⁸⁴ The author of the paper went so far as to request that the leadership

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*: Schweig to RMVP, Berlin, 3.6.1941 (reply to a letter from Foreign Office of 13.5.1941).

⁸⁰ The Foreign Office asserted that 'there can be no question of this institution's being used in the reorganization of international associations': *ibid.*: Foreign Office to RMVP, Berlin, 30.7.1941 (copy).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*: Schw[eig] to RMVP, Berlin, 15.8.1941.

⁸² In view of the grant of a quarter of a million dollars that the UIA had previously received from the Carnegie Foundation, the organization's financial needs were set at 291,000 Reichsmark, to be provided out of the propaganda fund: NA, Jahresberichte, Submission to the Minister, RMVP draft, Berlin, 17.6.1941. In addition, the DKZ asked for a grant of 341,20 Reichsmark for the restructuring of the UIA. As provisional director of the UIA, Karl Schweig had his own secretary in Brussels and was himself on the UIA payroll, which was financed by the Germans: cf. NA, Jahresberichte: Budget Plan of the Union of International Associations, Brussels, Berlin, 3.1.1942, [signed] Schweig. (Schweig received a monthly remuneration of 600 Reichsmark.) The personnel listed here comprised the Administrator van Loock, his secretary Jean Bergmann, a scientific assistant Marcel Paternostre, the provisional director's secretary Karl van de Woestijnje, the secretary Andrée van de Woestijnje, a caretaker, a porter, a female janitor and a chauffeur; two posts were vacant at the time of this budget (NA, Jahresberichte).

⁸³ Cf. HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 367: Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Union of International Associations in Brussels by Karl Schweig, SS-Untersturmführer, Deputy Chairman of the German Central Conference Office and Provisional Director of the Union of International Associations. The paper is in printed form but does not give a date or place of origin; the title page contains the note, 'This "Memorandum" is to be treated as a secret document under §88 . . . This Secret Paper is therefore to be made available only to authorized persons.'

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 26f.

of the new office should be accorded diplomatic privileges and the new institution granted extraterritoriality.⁸⁵

IV: The Perils of Success and the End of the DKZ (1941–3)

‘In order that the Union’s numerous external relationships should not be sacrificed’,⁸⁶ the UIA under German leadership became a hive of activity. In the occupied territories it busied itself with compiling inventories of still-existing international organizations, and reports signed by Schweig’s secretary in Brussels contained the minutes of interrogations of presidents and general secretaries.⁸⁷ An action report of the Paris office of the UIA covering the month of January 1943 gives evidence of how intimately the UIA was involved in enquiries into, and repression of, international organizations, and how closely it worked with the DKZ, the military authorities and the Sicherheitsdienst. The report states that the ‘survey of international associations resident in France . . . [would appear to be] two-thirds complete’. ‘With regard to matters of interest to SD-Frankreich that have been ascertained in the course of enquiries in the area of political associations, the Paris office has notified SD-Frankreich of these directly, in the form of reports.’⁸⁸ At the same time as the UIA became involved in the process of German occupation, its secretariat in Brussels continued to work as though there were no world war going on. In the autumn of 1941 the UIA sent out questionnaires for the ostensible purpose of compiling a directory of international associations in Europe.⁸⁹ The operation was so well disguised that a large number of international organizations readily provided information. Few responded like the International Game-Shooting Council, which asked to see first a questionnaire filled in by the UIA.⁹⁰ Information about international organizations and their representatives was also collected in countries to which the occupying forces did not have access. On several occasions agents provided by the SS investigated the numbers and workings of international institutions based in Switzerland. Special interest was paid to those international associations that had remained in Geneva after a substantial portion of the official League of Nations family had departed. The DKZ compiled these data into lists which, at least for those organizations coming under the aegis of the propaganda ministry, were intended to be a source

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸⁶ NA, Jahresberichte: Submission to the Minister, RMVP draft, Berlin, 17.6.1941.

⁸⁷ An example is the interrogation of the general secretary of the International Stomatological Association that K. van de Woestijne conducted on 26.5.1942. Woestijne stated, however, that the general secretary had already received a ‘visit from a certain Herr Olsen, a German’: HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 297.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 362: Union of International Associations, Paris office, Action Report for January 1943, Paris, 30.1.1943, [signed] Wimmer.

⁸⁹ The directory was to constitute a National Socialist edition of the *Handbook of International Organisations* previously published by the League of Nations.

⁹⁰ HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 164: International Game-Shooting Council to the Administrator of the Union of International Associations, Paris, 17.11.1941.

of advice for use once the war was over. In addition to these activities made possible by the war, the DKZ continued to fulfil its earlier domestic tasks, to vet currency applications and to authorize conferences.

And yet by 1941 the DKZ had passed its zenith. Its downfall was the result, not of failing zeal or lack of opportunities for action, but of its very success. Already by 1940 the Foreign Office had ceased to be content with mere attempts to restrain the DKZ and had initiated a debate on the question of the place that international organizations should occupy within the National Socialist state and the authority to which they should be subordinated. The offensive strategy launched by the Foreign Office set in motion a tussle over basic principles: over the rôle of internationalist ideas within a National Socialist system that was, in the last analysis, ideologically incompatible with them, and over the precise definition of the nature, scope and purpose of foreign policy. In the course of the dispute—a bizarre one to be held in the midst of war—the two adversaries expended considerable time and energy lining up supporters and carrying out research. Each side accumulated quantities of data, the Foreign Office too now demanding a list of organizations ‘the transfer of which to Germany appears to be urgently necessary or at least desirable’.⁹¹ The two sides also had recourse to legal manoeuvres: first the DKZ obtained an opinion from the (German) Institute for Foreign Public Law and International Law.⁹² Then the Foreign Office demanded that an inter-ministerial committee prepare a law on international organizations in Germany, simultaneously supplying its own draft.⁹³ Henceforth the foundation of an inter-ministerial administrative unit became an important argument in the conflict. The head of the legal division in the propaganda ministry viewed the convening of this committee as a further attempt by the Foreign Office to ‘take over the International Association area by devious means’.⁹⁴ Although the committee came to nothing, there was no talk of a return to normal relations. One day after the Foreign Office’s unsuccessful intervention the propaganda ministry and the DKZ made a counter-move and joined forces with the International Chamber of Law. As part of this operation Schweig summoned Helmuth Aschenbrenner to attend a meeting with the General Secretary of the International Chamber of Law at the headquarters of the UIA at rue Ducale in Brussels.⁹⁵ Aschenbrenner edited the *Archiv für das Recht der Internationalen Organisationen*, first published in

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 373: Reich Ministry of the Interior (copy) to divisional departments and Reichsführer SS and Chief of German Police in Reich Ministry of the Interior, Berlin, 25.9.1940.

⁹² *Ibid.*, vol. 379: Director of Institute for Foreign Public Law and International Law to DKZ, Berlin, 13.1.1940.

⁹³ *Ibid.*: Foreign Office to Reich Ministry of Justice, Reich Ministry of the Interior, Reich Ministry for Art, Science and Education, RMVP, Reich Finance Ministry, Reich Economics Ministry, Reichsführer SS and Chief of Police in Reich Ministry of the Interior, Reich Ministry for Food and Agriculture, Reich Post Ministry, Berlin, 17.5.1941 (copy).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*: RMVP, Ministerialdirigent Dr Schmidt-Leonhardt (copy) to DKZ for information and retention, Berlin, 11.6.1941.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*: Schweig to General Secretary Aschenbrenner, International Tobacco Society, Berlin, 7.6.1941.

1940. Schweig himself stood behind its shifting editorial board. The plan was that this journal should now become the publicity organ of a committee, attached to the International Chamber of Law, that would henceforth be responsible for dealing with the legal position of international organizations. An agreement between Goebbels and Reich Minister Frank, the President of the International Chamber of Law, confirmed the scheme.⁹⁶ Goebbels appointed a triumvirate to organize the committee and supervise the 'transition' of the journal.

To all appearances Schweig, who had previously operated somewhat on the periphery of the propaganda ministry, was now set to make his next upwards career move. He belonged to the triumvirate together with the heads of the propaganda and legal divisions of the propaganda ministry.⁹⁷

In the second volume of the *Archiv*, which at once attended to the new task, the head of the DKZ figured prominently. Immediately following the statement by Frank came a declaration of principles signed by Schweig, calling for international organizations to be accorded a specialized legal status. Schweig wrote two further articles for the same volume,⁹⁸ though the second on tricky details concerning the 'legal situation of the international organizations in occupied territories' had an anonymous asterisk instead of the author's name.⁹⁹ The collaboration with the International Chamber of Law and the issuing of its own publicity strengthened the DKZ, which according to a directive from July 1941 now also had to be informed formally about the displacement of international organizations.¹⁰⁰ Its enhanced standing, however, also attracted the interest of the propaganda ministry. Thus, the ministry carried out an administrative restructuring, that reinforced its own presence within the DKZ. Following a directive from Goebbels, Ministerialdirigent Berndt informed the DKZ, which until then had been headed by a chairman (Gutterer) and his deputy (Schweig), that it would now be given a presidency as an executive committee. Gutterer remained as president. Berndt (since September 1941 the new head of the propaganda division within the propaganda ministry)¹⁰¹ became vice-president

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*: President, International Chamber of Law to RMVP, Dr Josef Goebbels, [signed] Frank, Reich Minister (copy), Berlin, 7.6.1941.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*: 'Copy sent for information ... The workings of the arrangement to be reported', [signed] Dr Goebbels.

⁹⁸ K. F. Schweig, 'Was versteht man unter "Association"?', *Archiv für das Recht der Internationalen Organisationen*, 2 (1941), pp. 49–52.

⁹⁹ ***, 'Die rechtliche Situation der internationalen Organisationen in besetzten Gebieten', *Archiv für das Recht der Internationalen Organisationen*, 2 (1941), pp. 52–7. In its manuscript form the article was headed 'Statement by the Provisional Director of the Union of International Associations in Brussels and the General Secretary of the International Tobacco Society in Bremen' (HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 379).

¹⁰⁰ This directive stated that the propaganda ministry was to be informed about the relocation of international associations both to and from Germany and that the body commissioned by the propaganda ministry to deal with these questions was the DKZ. Cf. NA, RMVP 1936–44, T-70, roll 106, Pro.6506, 3629383f: Circular Decree of Reich Minister and Head of the Reich Chancellery, [signed] Dr Lammers.

¹⁰¹ Longerich, *Propagandisten*, p. 110.

and Schweig executive vice-president. In addition to the presidency the DKZ now also had a management board, on which senior officials of the propaganda ministry were the dominant group.¹⁰² The purpose of this expansion was to eliminate clashes of responsibility within the ministry and bring together all those with a stake in the area of international conferences, thereby thwarting any further attempts by the Foreign Office to establish an inter-ministerial committee.¹⁰³

With the new leadership structure, however, the real objective of the Central Conference Office—acquiring extraterritorial status—became increasingly difficult to achieve. Therefore the idea of a change of Trojan horses seemed a promising one and the DKZ came closer to the Chamber of Law. As an admittedly international organization but also a National Socialist one, which did not have a reputation of being a formerly hostile institution, the International Chamber of Law was ideally suited as a device for internationalizing the DKZ. Schweig therefore began to put international legal organizations based in Belgium at the service of the International Chamber of Law.¹⁰⁴ When in March the ministry of justice put a draft law into circulation which assigned special rights to the Chamber of Law, the situation seemed to improve appreciably.¹⁰⁵ However, the attempt to set up international organizations with special extraterritorial rights now noticeably met with resistance from the SS and the military authorities, the DKZ's key backers within the power structure. The SS had already come out against the enhancement of the legal status of the International Chamber of Law back in September 1941.¹⁰⁶ The dismantling of the plan to instrumentalize the Chamber, though, came about only when the propaganda ministry itself now also acted to neutralize the DKZ. In a rare display of unity, the opponents of the DKZ launched an operation to this effect in the spring of 1942. Those within the propaganda ministry who favoured a compromise solution with the Foreign Office had been gaining ground.¹⁰⁷ This group, led by Professor Hunke, wanted to exploit the power of the Central Conference

¹⁰² These were Prof. Hunke, President of the Advertising Council of the German Economy; Reichskommissar Dr Maiwald; Reichsamtseiter Tiessler, as link to the Party Chancellery; Ministerialrat Dr Ziegler, Rosenberg office; Ministerialrat Dr Mahlo; and Oberregierungsrat Dr Gast. Cf. HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 373: Minutes of the Meeting of Members of the DKZ, 31.10.1941 and Programme of Minutes of the 4th Meeting of Members of the DKZ.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*: Schweig to RMVP, Berlin, 13.9.1941.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 258: Executive Vice-President to International Chamber of Law, General Secretary Dr Pfeiffer, Berlin, 4.3.1942, [signed] Schw[eig].

¹⁰⁵ Under these special rights, the Chamber of Law was assigned the status of a public-law corporation and its head was given diplomatic status. The earlier restructuring of the International Centre of Sylviculture provided the model for this special status. Cf. *ibid.*: 'Kabinettsvorlage', Reich Minister of Justice to Reichsminister and Head of the Reich Chancellery; For Information, to the Reich Ministers, Berlin, 14.3.1942.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*: Notes on the Discussion of Responsibilities on 25.9.1941 Regarding Legal Status of International Chamber of Law, annotated 'To the German Central Conference Office. This copy sent for information'.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 317: Head, Section A to Reich Minister, regarding Inter-Ministerial Committee for Inter-State Conferences and Associations, Berlin, 12.5.1942.

Office as a means of increasing the sphere of influence of the propaganda ministry. They argued that the formation of an inter-ministerial committee would ultimately give the propaganda ministry 'thorough oversight of all plans of the ministries that are important as far as foreign propaganda is concerned'. With the DKZ integrated, 'the foreign branches of the other ministries, which hitherto have dealt solely with the Foreign Office, will come into close contact with the *Promi* [propaganda ministry]. We shall gain increasing influence over the plans of these branches.'¹⁰⁸ The DKZ, however, was going to be reintegrated only if it could be prevented at the eleventh hour from attaining a special independent status in tandem with the International Chamber of Law. A move against the *Archiv*, the journal jointly run by the DKZ and the Chamber, made it markedly less likely that the DKZ would succeed. In the summer of 1942 the propaganda ministry delayed publication of the third volume,¹⁰⁹ and in September the foreign ministry demanded a right of preliminary censorship, holding up the proofs for six weeks—a severe measure at a time when printing lead was in short supply and eighteen printing works in Bremen had recently been destroyed.¹¹⁰ A few weeks later the propaganda ministry went back to its records and despatched two papers, written in May, to the foreign ministry, which was now offered two positions on the DKZ's management board.¹¹¹ The outcome that Schweig had sought so long to avoid, direct control over the DKZ by the Foreign Office, now came to pass. The final crippling of the DKZ, however, was carried out at the very highest level. A confidential directive by the Führer of 4 November 1942 stated that

political, cultural and professional relations with foreign government representatives, organizations and individuals maintained by the Party, its organizations and affiliated associations are a part of German foreign policy. In order to avoid consequences that could hinder or be damaging to the goals of the foreign policy of the Reich, it is necessary that such relations come under the undivided direction of the Reich Foreign Minister, who is exclusively responsible for them to me.¹¹²

This was a broad definition; in practice foreign policy in November 1942 was confined to measures relevant to the war effort. Accordingly, 'the planning, preparation and staging of European or international events such as conferences and meetings or the establishment of associations etc.' was to be 'held over'

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Schweig, who featured prominently in this volume, had to refer to the harm done to the DKZ's special position and the 'gloating' prevailing at the Foreign Office before the paper needed for production of the volume was made available: cf. *ibid.*, vol. 257: Schweig/DKZ to RMVP, [Berlin], 7.7.1942.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*: Aschenbrenner to Dr Pfeiffer, General Secretary of the International Chamber of Law, and to K. Schweig for Information, 26.9.1942.

¹¹¹ The timing had originated with Prof. Hunke. For an explanation of the delay, cf. CHIDK, 1363/1/54: Foreign Division to Flickewirth/Office Staff, Berlin, 14.10.1942.

¹¹² HIA, Germany, DKZ, vol. 367: The Führer, Directive V 19/42, Führer Headquarters, 4.11.1942, [signed] Adolf Hitler, in Reich Directive Bulletin, Munich, 11.11.1942, edition A, series 45/42, copy, Confidential, Not for Publication.

or, in urgent cases, had to be approved by the foreign ministry.¹¹³ The personal networks which the DKZ had spent so much effort building up, its relations with foreign diplomats, the invitations of foreigners to Germany and arrangements for travel abroad were also now to be handled by the Foreign Office.

The DKZ's response was feverish. Schweig recognized that the Führer's directive had 'transferred to the Foreign Office powers that had previously belonged exclusively to the German Central Conference Office'.¹¹⁴ He tried to preserve the DKZ's rôle as a cover organization for exerting political influence in the area of international conferences. His attempt failed, however, and a series of decrees from different agencies now placed drastic curbs on the DKZ's abilities to stage gatherings.¹¹⁵ By November 1942 Schweig's position had become an extremely difficult one. A document issued by the military commander in Belgium placed him under German military authority until 31 March 1943 as 'Administrator for Enemy Firms'.¹¹⁶ In March he anticipated the predictable notice of conscription and volunteered for service with the Waffen-SS.¹¹⁷ It seems, however, that even now the experienced tactician did not go to war without having arranged some safeguards. Maintaining that he had 'been offered a similar position' after completing front-line duty,¹¹⁸ Schweig left the now powerless DKZ; a senior official of the propaganda ministry replaced him. The SS, however, continued to be in charge in Brussels and Paris. The Sicherheitsdienst had taken over the administration of the UIA,¹¹⁹ and the UIA branch office in Paris also came under its wing. Schweig doubtless planned, therefore, to obtain 'a similar position' in either Brussels or Paris rather than in Berlin.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*: Statement of German Central Conference Office regarding the Führer's Decree of 4.11.1942, published in Reich Directive Bulletin of the NSDAP, 11.11.1942, edition A, series 45/42.

¹¹⁵ NA, RMVP 1936-44, T-70, roll 106, Pro.6506, 3629450: Letter from RMVP/Gutterer to Supreme Reich Authorities, Reich Governors, Land Governments, Berlin, 14.1.1943. However, a ban on all conferences and meetings not relevant to the war effort—with no exemption clause for the DKZ—was not imposed until the summer of 1944: cf. NA, Microfilmed Captured German Documents, RMVP, T-580, roll 642, file 381: Circular Note from State Secretary Leopold Gutterer to the Supreme Reich Authorities, Land Governments, Reich Governors, Berlin, 3.8.1944.

¹¹⁶ CHIDK, 1363/1/166: Military Commander in Belgium and Northern France, Chief of Military Administration, Certification Valid until 31.3.1943, Brussels, 18.11.1942. The certification is 'valid only in conjunction with the SS-Führer Identity Document no. 415,917' (*ibid.*).

¹¹⁷ CHIDK, 1363/1/166: Sch[weig] to State Secretary Gutterer, President of the German Central Conference Office, [Berlin], 5.3.1943. Schweig was ordered to report to Prague: cf. NA, Roll List for SS Officers, Personnel Files, microfilm publication, A3343 series SSO, roll 124B: SS Personnel Head Office, 7.7.1943.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ It did not, however, take on its expenditures, which 'the Military Commander had met out of the occupation expenditures': cf. *ibid.*: Pro VS/Dr Schäfer to Director Pro, Berlin, 8.4.1943.

V: Concluding Remarks

Leaving aside the contingencies of historical events, two factors governed the rise and fall of the German Central Conference Office. These were the tension between competing areas of authority, and the dilemma that while access to information was conditional upon the co-operativeness of the authorities, those very authorities were difficult to handle. Most of them firmly opposed to the idea—inherent in the DKZ's conception of information—that the office should be built up from a mere documentation agency into an independent organization. These problems characterized all three phases of the evolution of the DKZ. The first phase lasted from 1934, when a belated process of modernization began, until the beginning of the war, as the office strove to strengthen the German presence at international academic and scientific conferences. Contrary to what might have been expected, the outbreak of war did not pose a threat to the DKZ; it did, though, inaugurate a clear change of gear, as the occupation of Belgium and the capture of Paris gave the office access to the centres of internationalism that had been based there since the nineteenth century. Plundered files from the occupied territories enlarged the information resources of the DKZ. National Socialist control of the UIA enabled the DKZ to transcend its rôle as a merely national organization and began to open the way for it to develop into an international one. A third phase, however, began in 1941–2, when the leadership of the DKZ lost out to the foreign ministry in a fundamental debate on the function of international organizations within the National Socialist state; and the military situation after defeat at Stalingrad hastened the office's downfall.

The rise of the DKZ, and the plundering it carried out in the occupied territories, are an instructive aspect of the history of the Third Reich. Of course, a great many acts of pillage by different National Socialist organizations are documented, involving valuable objects of all kinds—even, bizarrely, grand pianos¹²⁰—and likewise entailing a significant effort of logistics. The DKZ, however, did not collect artistic or other treasures systematically. Even though there is an obvious point of comparison with the theft of records that marks the history of wars in general,¹²¹ the comparison applies only to those documents of Germany's opponents that had previously been secret. In the present case, these constituted a small proportion of the total mass of material that was transported. The bulk of the enormous haul consisted of information—such as the statutes of international organizations that the DKZ so carefully filed—which was accessible on an individual basis. This information was, however, of great

¹²⁰ Willem de Vries, *Sonderstab Musik: Music Confiscations by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg under the Nazi Occupation of Western Europe* (Amsterdam, 1996) and Seppo Kuusisto, *Alfred Rosenberg in der nationalsozialistischen Außenpolitik 1933–1939* (Helsinki, 1984).

¹²¹ Sacha Zala, *Geschichte unter der Schere politischer Zensur. Amtliche Aktensammlungen im internationalen Vergleich* (Munich, 2001).

scarcity value in its totality, as a representative picture of the evolution of international networks. There was a remarkable degree of agreement among the authorities of the Third Reich, in the foreign ministry as well as in the Central Conference Office itself, about the importance of these networks. The DKZ shows that National Socialist authorities tried to dissolve the contradiction between co-operation and competition by the influencing, instrumentalizing and exerting of control over an extremely broad and varied group of international networks. Those activities highlight the danger to which this element of international relations—increasingly significant since the end of the nineteenth century and still not sufficiently considered by historians—remains exposed.

TRANSLATED BY RICHARD DEVESON